

## Message Text

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 2327

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV SEDU LA

SUBJECT: LAO EDUCATION SYSTEM

REF VIENTIANE 2088

SUMMARY: LPDR PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE OPENING FOR THE 1976-77 ACADEMIC YEAR UNDER A NEW UNIFIED NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM. PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN VIENTIANE HAVE BEEN EITHER CLOSED OR PUT UNDER GOVERNMENT CONTROL. THE INFLUX OF STUDENTS FROM THE FORMER COMMUNIST ZONE HAS CAUSED PROBLEMS BECAUSE OF OVERCROWDING AND THE INABILITY TO MEET ACADEMIC STANDARDS IN THE VIENTIANE SCHOOL SYSTEM. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SCHOOLS IN BOTH THE FORMER COMMUNIST CONTROLLED ZONE AND THE ROYAL LAO GOVERNMENT (RLG) ZONE ARE CURRENTLY REOPENING FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 1976-77 UNDER A NEW UNIFIED NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM. A SERIES OF SEMINARS WAS ORGANIZED THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER VACATION  
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IN ORDER TO TRAIN TEACHERS IN THE POLITICS AND IN

EDUCATION PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW REGIME. PHOUMI VONGVICHIT, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF EDUCATION, ADDRESSED TEACHERS AT SEVERAL OF THESE SEMINARS. THE TEACHERS IN TURN ARE NOW TRAINING THE STUDENTS IN A ONE WEEK POLITICAL SEMINAR BEFORE REGULAR CLASSES BEGIN ON SEPTEMBER 27.

2. THE NEW EDUCATION PLAN IS ORGANIZED ON FIVE LEVELS: ONE YEAR OF KINDERGARTEN; FIVE GRADES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL; THREE GRADES OF LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL; THREE GRADES OF HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL; AND COLLEGE. STUDENTS GOING ON TO COLLEGE IN VIENTIANE ENTER THE SISAVANGVONG UNIVERSITY SYSTEM WHICH OFFERS SEVERAL COURSES OF STUDY. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ARE QUALIFIED AFTER TWO YEARS AND HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS AFTER FOUR YEARS BEYOND THE SECONDARY LEVEL. AFTER COMPLETING THE SECONDARY LEVEL, NURSES STUDY FOR TWO YEARS AND DOCTORS FOR SEVEN AT THE MEDICAL SCHOOL CONNECT WITH MAHASOT HOSPITAL IN VIENTIANE. THE LAW SCHOOL WILL NOT OPEN FOR THE CURRENT ACADEMIC YEAR. STUDENTS WHO ATTENDED THE LAW SCHOOL LAST YEAR WILL STUDY AT THE NATIONAL TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGE AND ARE THEN EXPECTED TO TUTOR STUDENTS SELECTED FOR FOREIGN SCHOLARSHIPS.

3. MOST PRIVATE SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN FORCED TO CLOSE BY THE LPDR AND STUDENTS HAVE BEEN TOLD TO ATTEND THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS. THE CASE OF DARATSAMOOT SCHOOL ILLUSTRATES THE DIFFICULTIES CAUSED BY THE CLOSURE OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS. FORMERLY RUN BY CATHOLIC NUNS, DARATSAMOOT SCHOOL WAS PHYSICALLY OCCUPIED LAST JUNE BY SOLDIERS. STUDENTS WERE TOLD TO ATTEND THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS WHEN THE NEW TERM BEGAN THIS SEPTEMBER. THE DARATSAMOOT SCHOOL BUILDING IS NOW OCCUPIED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF MINING AND IS OCCASIONALLY USED FOR SPECIAL SEMINARS. MEANWHILE, FORMER STUDENTS FROM DARATSAMOOT ARE FINDING IT DIFFICULT TO REGISTER IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS BECAUSE OF OVERCROWDING. A LAO MOTHER WHOSE FOUR CHILDREN ATTENDED DARATSAMOOT LAST YEAR COMPLAINED TO EMBASSY OFFICER

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THAT STUDENTS ARE ADMITTED TO THE OVERCROWDED PUBLIC SCHOOLS ON A PRIORITY BASIS. FORMER STUDENTS ARE ADMITTED FIRST, FOLLOWED BY STUDENTS WHOSE FAMILIES HAVE JUST MOVED TO VIENTIANE FROM VINGSAY, THE CAPITAL OF THE FORMER COMMUNIST CONTROLLED ZONE OF LAOS. LASTLY, STUDENTS COMING FROM PRIVATE SCHOOLS ARE CONSIDERED FOR ADMISSION. "THE SCHOOL OFFICIALS ASSURE ME THAT THERE WILL BE ROOM FOR MY CHILDREN BUT THE CLASSES ARE PACKED",

THE WORRIED MOTHER SAID TO AN EMBASSY OFFICER. FOR INSTANCE, SHE SAID THAT ONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLASS HAD OPENED WITH 74 STUDENTS, ALTHOUGH THERE WERE PLANS TO DIVIDE THE CLASS SOON.

4. BESIDES AGGRAVATING THE OVERCROWDING, WHICH HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PROBLEM IN VIENTIANE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, THE INFLUX OF STUDENTS FROM VINGSAY IS CAUSING PROBLEMS OF MEETING ACADEMIC STANDARDS. A STUDENT TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT THE MAJORITY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO HAD COME FROM VIENGSAI TO VIENTIANE FAILED LAST TERM IN ALL OF THEIR ACADEMIC COURSES SUCH AS MATH, SCIENCE, AND GEOGRAPHY, WITH ONE EXCEPTION OF POLITICS IN WHICH THE STUDENTS EXCELLED. THIS SUGGESTS THAT THE SCHOOLS IN THE FORMER COMMUNIST ZONE PROBABLY TAUGHT ONLY POLITICS. STUDENTS WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY STUDIED IN HANOI ALSO DID POORLY LAST TERM IN VIENTIANE, BUT THOSE WHO HAD STUDIED IN THE PRC WERE WELL PREPARED IN ACADEMIC SUBJECTS. AS A RESULT OF FAILING MOST OF THEIR COURSES LAST TERM, NEARLY ALL OF THE STUDENTS WHO HAD COME FROM THE FORMER COMMUNIST ZONE MUST NOW REPEAT THE ACADEMIC YEAR BEGINNING THIS FALL. THE STUDENT NOTED TO EMBASSY OFFICER, HOWEVER, THAT THE SON OF NOUPHANH SITHPASAY, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, WAS PROMOTED TO THE NEXT GRADE EVEN THOUGH HE HAD FLUNKED MOST OF HIS ACADEMIC COURSES. THE STUDENT CONFESSED CONCERN THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD EVENTUALLY ELIMINATE ACADEMIC COURSES NOW TAUGHT IN THE SCHOOLS AND TEACH ONLY THE NEW POLITICS.

5. PRIVATE SCHOOLS RUN BY THE CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE COMMUNITIES HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO REMAIN OPEN FOR THE  
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CURRENT ACADEMIC YEAR. THE SCHOOLS ARE PERMITTED TO CONTINUE TEACHING CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE BUT ACADEMIC COURSES AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL MUST BE TAUGHT IN THE LAO LANGUAGE. FRENCH, ENGLISH AND SPANISH ARE NOW TAUGHT AS FOREIGN LANGUAGES AT THE VIENTIANE LYCEE. FORMERLY ALL ACADEMIC COURSES AT THE LYCEE WERE TAUGHT IN FRENCH BY FRENCH TEACHERS WITH LAO LITERATURE OFFERED AS AN ELECTIVE COURSE. NOW, HOWEVER, ALL ACADEMIC COURSES MUST BE TAUGHT IN LAO. ENGLISH, RUSSIAN AND FRENCH WILL BE TAUGHT AS FOREIGN LANGUAGES THIS YEAR AT THE NATIONAL TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGE. SIX SOVIET TEACHERS ARE EXPECTED TO TEACH RUSSIAN THERE THIS YEAR.

6. LAO PARTY NEWSPAPER, "VOICE OF THE PEOPLE",

SEPTEMBER 8 CONFIRMED REFTEL REPORT THAT MANY STUDENTS ARE BEING SENT TO EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES THIS YEAR FOR SCHOLARSHIPS. THE PAPER REPORTED THAT 176 STUDENTS HAD BEEN SLECTED FOR SCHOLARSHIPS, OF WHOM 148 ARE GOING TO THE SOVIET UNION, 10 TO EAST GERMANY, AND 18 TO HUNGARY. THE PAPER ALSO SAID THAT IN THE FUTURE OTHER STUDENTS WILL GO TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA, POLAND, RUMANIA AND BULGARIA.  
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